



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO**  
**Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **INSPECTORS ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR EXOTIC PESTS IN HOLIDAY PACKAGES**

**San Luis Obispo, CA, December 10, 2012** – Staff from the San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures are busy inspecting holiday packages and other shipments containing plant material to ensure the County remains free of exotic insects and plant diseases that are harmful to agriculture and the local environment. “Unfortunately invasive pests do not take a break for the holidays. Destructive insects can hitch hike on Christmas wreaths and other greenery. If they are inadvertently introduced into the environment these insects can cause serious consequences to agriculture or the local environment long after the holiday season has passed”, according to Martin Settevendemie, San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer.

Throughout the year Inspectors monitor and inspect packages arriving into the county containing plant material. If insects or signs of plant diseases are found, the receiver is notified and appropriate follow-up action is taken. The increased volume and the nature of plant shipments arriving into the county during the Christmas holiday season makes inspections more challenging. According to Settevendemie, over the past year, 3460 packages were inspected, and 47 were rejected for harboring pests or for shipping violations.

To avoid shipping or receiving unwanted pests Settevendemie advises the following:

- Purchase decorative greenery, plants and Christmas trees from local sources. Trees sold at local Christmas tree lots are randomly inspected and originate from areas that have a low risk of importing unwanted pests.

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- Do not ask friends or relatives to send you live plant material or fresh fruits or vegetables originating from outside the county.
- Use only reputable commercial sources for on-line shopping. These businesses are responsible for knowing California's quarantine requirements.
- If you see an unusual insect on your Christmas tree or other holiday plants, contact the San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture at 805-781-5910 or the local University of California Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program at 805-781-5939.
- Find out about shipping restrictions or quarantines before shipping or receiving plant material by contacting the San Luis Obispo County Ag Department at 805-781-5910.
- Remind others about the importance of keeping unwanted invasive pests out of San Luis Obispo County

For more information about invasive pests visit the California Department of Food and Agriculture's website at: [www.cdffa.ca.gov](http://www.cdffa.ca.gov)

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